

# Keep active and safe at any age

## Staying active as you age helps you remain healthy, live longer and feel better.

More older people than ever before are involved in exercise and sports. They've learned that being physically fit doesn't have to mean aching muscle from workouts and hard-to-maintain exercise schedules. Many people are getting their exercise in active pastimes such as biking, skiing, and tennis. Others prefer less active recreation such as walking, gardening, or golf.

All are finding relaxation and fun while they secure a healthy future. Exercise helps you feel better and improves your health. Orthopedic surgeons say that by spending a little time each day in some type of physical activity, you can enjoy these significant benefits:

- Longer, healthier life
- Stronger bones
- Reduced joint and muscle pain
- Improved mobility and balance
- Lower risk of falls and serious injuries like hip fractures
- Slower loss of muscle mass

People are living longer these days and their quality of life depends on being healthy and remaining independent. Staying active can lower your risk for many common diseases,

relieve the pain of arthritis, and help you to recover faster when you do get sick.

## Stay active and safe

While it's important to stay active, it's also important to play it safe. As more older people engage in physical activities, sports-related injuries are increasing. This is especially true for those who ride bicycles, ski, lift weights, and use exercise machines.

According to a study by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), an estimated 53,000 people age 65 and older were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms for sports-related injuries in 1996. That's a 54 percent increase in these injuries from 1990. Additional injuries were treated in physicians' offices.

### Estimated injuries to people 65 and over Selected groups of sports by year

	1990	1996
<b>More active*</b>	<b>16,800</b>	<b>30,000</b>
<b>Less active**</b>	<b>12,300</b>	<b>14,500</b>

\* Bicycles, skiing, exercise equipment and weightlifting, tennis, swimming, skating, and horseback riding

\*\* Golf, fishing, bowling, billiards, and shuffleboard

Source US Consumer Product Safety Commission  
National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS)

The increase in injuries is probably due to more older people engaging in active sports.

Fortunately, most of these injuries were not severe and could be prevented.

For example, in the CPSC study, very few of the older bikers treated in emergency rooms for head injuries were wearing bike helmets. However, wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of serious head injury by up to 85 percent. That's a small precaution for a big payoff.

By getting regular exercise—and doing it safely—you can enjoy a healthier life.

### Your activity log

A balanced program of moderate physical activity 30 minutes a day is beneficial even for people with chronic conditions of bones and joints. The 30 minutes can be broken up into shorter periods such as 15 minutes of gardening in the morning and 15 minutes of brisk walking in the afternoon. Here's a sample activity log that you can use to keep track of the minutes you spend on physical activity.

Activity	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Brisk walking							
Gardening							
Mowing lawn							
Stretching exercises							
Weight lifting							
Jogging/running							
Aerobics							
Bicycling							
Stair climbing							
Swimming							
Tennis							
Bowling							
Golf							
Other sports							
Dancing							
Other activities							

## Seven tips to prevent injury

When you exercise, orthopedic surgeons and CPSC recommend that you follow these tips:

- 1 Always wear appropriate safety gear.** If YOU bike, always wear a bike helmet. Wear the appropriate shoes for each sport.
- 2 Warm-up before you exercise.** That could be a moderate activity such as walking at your normal pace, while emphasizing your arm movements.
- 3 Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.** You can break this into shorter periods of 10 or 15 minutes during the day.
- 4 Follow the 10 percent rule.** Never increase your program (i.e., walking or running distance or amount of weight lifted) more than 10 percent a week.
- 5 Try not to do the exact same routine two days in a row.** Walk, swim, play tennis, or lift weights. This works different muscles and keeps exercise more interesting.
- 6** When working out with exercise equipment, **read instructions carefully** and, if needed, ask someone qualified to help you. Check treadmills or other exercise equipment to be sure they are in good working order. If you are new to weight training, make sure you get proper information before you begin.

**7 Stop exercising if you experience severe pain or swelling.** Discomfort that persists should always be evaluated.

There are lots of ways to enhance your life as you age, and staying fit is one of the most important.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

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Information provided by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.